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Tim W Hayes 03/02/2007 03:48:57 PM From DB/Inbox: Tim W Hayes

Cable
Text:

UNCLAS ANKARA 00406

SIPDIS
CX:

ACTION: PMA
INFO: FCS CONS AMB POL DCM DAO RAO ECON TSR PA

DISSEMINATION: PMA /1
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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1078
INFO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0893
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0030
RUEHYE/AMEMBASSY YEREVAN PRIORITY 1268
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP:PDUSDP/ISA:EUR/ISA:NESA/DSCA// PRIORITY
RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU PRIORITY
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000406

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL PGOV MARR MOPS TU IZ AR
SUBJECT: TURKISH FM GUL REAFFIRMS IMPORTANCE OF BILATERAL
PARTNERSHIP TO CODEL DICKS

¶1. SUMMARY: Turkish FM Gul told a congressional delegation that the US/Turkey relationship has weathered many storms but that a US congressional Armenian genocide resolution threatens to undermine cooperation on our shared goals for Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, NATO and more. US failure in Iraq will be Turkey's failure, Gul said. He urged delay of the referendum on Kirkuk; expressed support for the President's new Iraq strategy; and offered the Iraq Neighbors' process as a forum to coordinate support. Gul welcomed Ralston's appointment as PKK envoy but expressed impatience with the lack of tangible results. He and DG Ocak urged the group to consider all of the facts and the potential ramifications before approving an Armenian genocide resolution, a request echoed separately by Turkish MPs. Rep. Dicks welcomed the offer of a historical commission and any additional steps Turkey could take towards Armenia. Rep. Rothman pledged to press for more action by the Iraqi Kurds against the PKK. Rep. Murphy urged Turkey to provide additional troops to Afghanistan. END SUMMARY.

¶2. Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, in a February 20 discussion with a 6-member congressional delegation led by Representative Norm Dicks (D-WA), enumerated Turkey's cooperation with the US both in the past and the present. He cited Turkey's role as the eastern bulwark against the Soviet Union during the Cold War; support for reconciliation efforts, logistical support and training for Iraq; leadership

of ISAF multiple times, opening a PRT and constructing schools and hospitals in Afghanistan; contribution of troops to peacekeeping efforts in the Balkans and Lebanon; support for the international position against a nuclear Iran; and contributions to GWOT. However, he said, a US congressional resolution on an Armenian genocide threatens to damage our cooperation in these areas.

GENOCIDE RESOLUTION -- A PERIPHERAL ISSUE WITH GREAT IMPACT

¶13. Gul expressed frustration that arguments continue over an event that took place almost 100 years ago. Calling the 1915 forced relocation of Armenians from Turkey a "tragedy," he questioned the use of the term "genocide" to describe an action taken against a population revolting against its government during wartime. Use of the term makes citizens here very unhappy, especially when they recall the 3 million Turks killed in Balkan violence during and before WWI. The government will be unable to explain it if the measure passes.

¶14. FM Gul outlined Turkey's yet-unanswered offer to Armenia to establish a joint historical commission to study the issue. In response to a comment by Rep. Rothman (D-NJ), Gul stated that the commission is open to third parties, including historians from California.

¶15. Vefahan Ocak, new MFA Director General (DG) for Americas Affairs, noted that two delegation members are sponsors of the latest draft resolution. Asking rhetorically what other country in the region shares such a wide-ranging dialogue and agenda with the US, he warned that the genocide issue -- peripheral in comparison to our shared concerns -- threatens to derail bilateral cooperation on our core agenda. Turkey's offer to jointly examine history is genuine, he said. There is no ulterior motive. He urged the delegation to study the offer and to evaluate Armenia's objections, which, he claimed, have no intrinsic value. Rep. Dicks offered to explain Turkey's offer to others in Congress but urged that Turkey take any additional steps possible to reach out to the Armenians.

IRAQ -- YOUR FAILURE IS OUR FAILURE

¶16. In response to a question by Rep. Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) about the consequences of a US troop withdrawal from Iraq, Gul said that a US failure will be Turkey's failure. US forces should not withdraw immediately and leave a vacuum behind. Everything must be done to preserve that country's territorial integrity and unity. Towards that end, Turkey supports President Bush' strategy to secure Baghdad. Without stability or normal life in the capital, he said, one cannot be optimistic about the country. The constitutional committee should also complete its work on possible changes to that document; issues related to energy and federalization need to be addressed; Kirkuk must be avoided as an issue that could spread conflict; and the referendum should be postponed; former army officers who are not terrorists should be reintegrated; the government and Prime Minister should act more consciously as authorities for all of Iraq; Kurds and Shiites should not follow maximalist policies that keep Sunnis out; and Iraqi army training, while not successful to date, should continue. The US cannot be expected to stay in Iraq forever, he said. Iraqis must take responsibility for themselves.

¶17. Partition is not an option, said Gul in response to Rep. Kaptur's (D-OH) suggestion that a "soft partition" might provide a solution to the instability. Iraq is not like the former USSR. There are no natural borders between the ethnic groups. If Iraq was divided into three states, Iran would influence the Shia area and become a real threat to the Gulf region. Many government and religious leaders came from Iran, which already has influence in Baghdad. The Sunnis, however, would be the most dangerous element. The wealthy, educated Sunnis would leave, stated Gul, and the terrorists would stay, giving al Quaeda a true fundamentalist state. Civil war would continue and -- willingly or not -- neighboring countries would get involved.

JOIN FORCES WITH IRAQ'S NEIGHBORS

¶18. Gul touted the Iraqi Neighbors' process, established at Turkey's initiative, as a tool which the US could employ to foster greater regional support for Iraq's security and democratic development and to unite the regional countries on other issues. The group has already agreed on a joint mechanism to counter terrorism, he said. In response to Rep. Carney's (D-PA) question about what the US should do to stabilize the region, Gul said that US engagement is critical and recommended the use of "soft power" to spread the values of democracy, a free-market economy, and human rights. Rep. Rothman applauded the Neighbors' effort and urged that regional leaders -- who may be more effective than the US to get Iraq to move forward on constitutional reforms -- use this forum to press for action.

PKK - THE WEDGE BETWEEN FRIENDS

¶19. The PKK terrorist group is creating problems between the US and Turkey, said Gul. Responding to PKK attacks consumes Turkey's military resources. The Foreign Minister said it is unimaginable that the PKK finds safehaven in the friendly country of Iraq that the US supports and that Turkey cannot do anything about it. Turkey has its own military and can act, but does not want to cause more problems in Iraq. It hopes the US will help. Gul welcomed the efforts of Gen (ret) Ralston but said some think he was appointed to "satisfy Turkey and buy time." Turkey expects a tangible result at the end, said Gul, and urged Congress to press the administration for action.

TURKEY A LEADER IN AFGHANISTAN

¶110. Turkey has increased its troop levels in Afghanistan to nearly 1000, said Gul. He noted Turkey's two past ISAF commands, its ongoing shared leadership of ISAF Kabul Central with Italy and France, the establishment of a PRT in Wardak, and its pledge of \$100 million in assistance. This assistance helped to build and manage hospitals where 650,000 Afghans have been treated and to open 44 schools around the country where 35,000 children are being educated.

¶111. Rep. Murphy (D-PA) thanked Turkey for its contribution of peacekeeping troops in the Balkans and elsewhere. Expressing concern about an expected Taliban spring offensive, Murphy asked if Turkey could contribute additional troops to Afghanistan. Gul stated that Turkey's recent increase of troops to 1000 was done at US request and said that the battle in Afghanistan cannot be won by military means alone. He urged the international community to increase efforts to reach out to the Afghan population, to include alternative crop development as part of the counter-narcotics program. Foreign forces cannot stay in Afghanistan forever, said Gul. We must strengthen the Afghans academically, socially and economically.

POSITIVE ENERGY STORY

¶112. Gul called bilateral energy cooperation a good news story, noting the US role in the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. Rep. Kaptur welcomed Gul's explanation of Turkey's energy pipeline projects. Kaptur noted her interest in developing port-to-port cooperation with other countries such as Turkey.

TURKISH MPs ON IRAQ AND ARMENIA

¶113. At a dinner in their honor, Codel members heard from AKP and opposition CHP members of parliament that they would not like to see a precipitous U.S. withdrawal from Iraq that would lead to the country's division on ethnic and sectarian lines. Several Turkish MPs expressed support for the conclusions in the Iraqi Study Group report and noted that Turkey has provided training to Iraqi politicians and encouraged Sunni participation in the political process. They noted the sensitivity of Kirkuk as a potentially

explosive microcosm of Iraq's problems, and said Turkey expects more U.S. support against PKK terrorism from northern Iraq. Reps Rothman and Kaptur urged Turkey to take a more active role with Iraq's neighbors, including at the parliamentary level, to foster regional stability, and they urged more Turkish-US parliamentary dialogue, including, for example, via DVC.

¶14. Turkish MPs asked how congressional passage of an Armenian genocide resolution would serve US interests, given the damage it would cause to US-Turkish relations. They claimed that government and opposition parties are working together to address Turkish-Armenian relations and both back the Turkish offer to establish a joint historical commission whose conclusions they would accept. Turkey needs more time and US support for this process, not a genocide resolution, they stated. Rep Rothman said it would be helpful if Turkey could show more leadership to improve relations with Armenia.

¶15. Codel Dicks did not have an opportunity to clear this message.

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